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The Friday Newsletter



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News Briefs

FOREST SERVICE HOLDS MEETING ON SECTION SIX REGULATIONS: A panel of consultants, made up of the original committee of scientists, met June 30-July 2 to discuss recently proposed changes in the National Forest Management Act Regulations.

The three-day meeting was held in Washington, D.C. and was open to the public. Panel members included Art Cooper of North Carolina State University, Rod Foil of Mississippi State University, Thad Box of Utah State University, Ron Stark of the Forest Service, PNW, on IPA appointment from the University of Idaho, Earl Stone of the University of Florida, Dennis Teeguarden of the University of California at Berkeley, and Bill Webb, who is retired.

Ray Housley chaired the meeting, and Art Cooper, who was chairman of the original committee, served as moderator for the panel. A number of different groups were represented and took part in the discussions, including industry, various environmental groups, other government agencies and Congress.

The objective of the meeting was to provide an opportunity for discussion among the consultants and conservation interest groups on major topics that emerged from earlier public comments on the proposed regulations. Departures from non-declining yield harvest levels, fish and wildlife requirements, and public involvement in the planning process highlighted the discussion.

The public comment period on the proposed revisions was extended through July 6.

A summary of the meeting is being prepared, which will contain the panel's

recommendations on revisions in the regulations. Copies of the summary will be available from Land Management Planning, WO, FTS 447-6697. After evaluation of all public comment, including that of the panel, final regulations will be published in the Federal Register.

CHANGES IN MERIT PAY SYSTEM: The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has approved several major changes in the Merit Pay System, which will be effective for the merit pay calculations in October.

The most interesting change is that individuals who receive "average" performance ratings will receive merit increases similar to non-merit pay employees of equal grade and salary. Employees with "above average" ratings will receive greater increases than comparable GS employees.

In addition, the rating adjustment factor has been increased from a two-to-one ratio, to a three-to-one ratio. This also gives greater merit increases to those with "above average" performance ratings. This means an employee with a 5.0 rating can earn triple the merit pay of an employee with a 3.0 rating. In addition, there are changes which affect the computation of merit pay for temporarily promoted employees and for employees who are unable to compete for merit pay, for example, recent reassignees from other agencies.

Last year's merit pay increases in the Forest Service were approximately \$872,000. Since OPM plans to include full within-grade increase funds this October, the fiscal year 1983 funding should be a minimum of \$1.8 million. OPM also plans to include one half of the comparability increase in the pool. This further increases the FY'83 funding estimate. With a 4 percent comparability increase, the total merit pay funding should be more than \$3.5 million.

LOOK BEYOND SHORT-TERM ISSUES TO TO LONG-TERM OPPORTUNITIES: I had the opportunity to discuss the Forest Service's "Issues Ahead," at the recent New York Forestry Congress, in Syracuse, N.Y.

In my remarks, I told the congress that we have the wisdom and the will to manage our forests and to use them well. But we must look more for agreement than for argument over the issues we face. And we must look beyond the short-term issues to the long-term opportunities which are emerging.

Examining the "issues approach" to forest management, it concerns me that we may be concentrating on short-term issues and missing the long-term opportunities beyond. It also bothers me that an issues approach focuses more on argument than on agreement on what should be done. Less time should be spent on reacting negatively to issues and more time spent on pursuing long-term opportunities.

The public fights hard over a seemingly endless progression of forestry issues because it cares deeply about them, but when our resource institutions get swept into the persistent crush of debate, it becomes too difficult for them to look at the larger picture--for example, the management opportunities over the next 20 to 40 years.

We have a finite forest land base, and demands for goods and services from those forests are increasing. Meeting the challenge of satisfying those demands without overwhelming or depleting the productive capacity of the forests is not a new challenge. But it is a challenge which must be met with new concepts of forest management.

We must not let a preoccupation with issues obscure our vision. There is altogether too much of an inherent tendency in forest management toward polarized approaches to issues--an approach which focuses more on the points which divide the various parties than on what they have in common, and where they agree.

We know that we must have a clean and healthy environment and a sound economy at

the same time. If we manage well, work to agree instead of argue, and look to the long-term opportunities of the future, we can have both.

ELECTRONICS CENTER SUPPORTS SPACE SHUTTLE: Several years ago the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Forest Service agreed to share the machine shop facilities at the Electronics Center in Beltsville, Md. NOAA needed a facility to build specialized precision equipment to support various terrestrial and space research programs.

The machine shop, a carry-over from the days when the Forest Service hand-built prototype radios, fire simulators, and weather telemetry devices, is now used by the WO, CS & T Staff, Radio & Electronics Management Group to fabricate test jigs used in the radio certification program, and to build special assemblies for new systems under study.

The most recent NOAA accomplishment was the design and construction of a test bed for a large-format camera, slated for a ride on one of the upcoming space shuttle flights. It will be used to make accurate photographs of the Earth for future maps. The test bed required a 4 X 10-foot base of I-beams, and the addition of special arms to a four-foot high hydraulic jack to raise, lower, and tilt the shutter/lense assembly.

After construction, it was disassembled, crated and shipped to New Mexico where it is now being reassembled for operational testing and calibration.

Volunteer Corner

DISTRICTS NEAR CITIES HAVE AN ADVANTAGE: As the Forest Service Volunteer Program continues to grow, we are learning a lot about making the most of the time and talents our volunteers donate.

One of the things we have learned is that while being closer to a large population center means more forest visitors, it also means that more volunteers are available to help us give those visitors the service they are entitled to.

The Sandia Ranger District on the Cibola National Forest in R-3 is a good example of what an enterprising staff can do to attract and make the most of volunteers.

Relatively small as districts go, the Sandia is 91,000 acres, and only about ten miles from one third (500,000 people) of the population of New Mexico. With no timber or range programs, it's almost like a great big city park. Last year, Ranger Jerry Greer said, the district had about 1.5 million visitors. That's a lot to handle with only 11 full time and a total of only 30 paid employees.

Jerry is proud of the district's volunteer program, and it's not surprising. In all, 17 groups and a total of 465 people donated 3,142 hours of work, valued at \$100,000 last year. They maintain the district trail system to Level 3, and do a number of other jobs which, without them, would go undone.

The list of volunteer groups ranges from environmental groups, to Boy and Girl Scouts, ROTC, the YWCA, hiking and ski clubs and the Lions Club, which maintains the district's special trail for handicapped persons.

There's even a volunteer executive, John Southwick, a retired engineer, who coordinates the program.

Jerry said most of the volunteers work on trail maintenance, in the Adopt-A-Trail Program, but 39 others do jobs like archaeological and wildlife surveys, and service as fire lookouts, wilderness rangers, librarians, and secretaries. One man is gathering information for a recreation opportunity guide, another fabricates temporary signs, another spends his volunteer time revising the district's maps, and an Eagle Scout maintains a wilderness skills trail which helps to teach visitors what the wilderness is all about.

On the Sandia District, a big population is not a problem. It's the district's best asset.

New Release

*Copies of the full text of the following speech may be obtained from the Speechwriting Section, OI, WO, FTS 447-6957.

Title: The Issues Ahead. Speaker: R. Max Peterson, Chief. Audience: New York Forestry Congress. Place: Syracuse, N.Y. Date: July 6, 1982.



Chief

